

*Simple's D-Kay for women is made from eco-certified leather and suede with a biodegradable midsole and outsole.*

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## The simpler the better

Simple Shoes has been associated with eco-friendly products since it was established in 1991 by Deckers Outdoor Corporation. The company is constantly looking for new ways to reduce the impact of its manufacturing processes and of its finished products on the environment. One of the brand's latest developments is its BIO.D footwear collection, which it claims can make a huge difference when the shoes come to the end of their natural lifespan.

The new line, which includes models for men and women, features biodegradable soles. The BIO.D products incorporate rubber, plastic and EVA foam and are manufactured using EcoPure, an organic compound additive containing millions of tiny microbes, that eventually eats away at the bonds holding the materials together. This allows the midsoles and outsoles of the styles, when exposed to the moisture and heat typical of landfills, to biodegrade in 20 years compared with hundreds of years.

A company spokesperson says: "BIO.D is an additive that we mix up into the EVA and rubber in the midsoles and outsoles of some of our shoes. To get technical for a second, BIO.D changes the molecular structure of oil-based materials

like rubber and EVA by opening up little gaps so the microbes can come along and snack on the molecules that, thanks to BIO.D, aren't stuck together anymore.

"Eventually the bottoms of these shoes find their way to a local landfill or the compost heap in your back yard. The microbes living in these particular warm and moist places start eating. They weasel their way into the broken molecular chains and eat and eat and eat until there's nothing but dirt left. And as you may already know, dirt is technically the point where something can't biodegrade any further."

The process works in both anaerobic and aerobic conditions, so whether shoes end up at the top or the bottom of a landfill, the EcoPure molecules still work. And because the microbes are only activated under conditions of moisture and warmth that are specific to landfills, there is no threat of shoes breaking down while they are being worn or stored at home. "Our focus at Simple is to make better shoes, shoes that look good and are made sustainably," says Cielo Rios, Simple's product line manager. "The BIO.D collection takes our efforts a serious step forward and we are happy to pioneer a new way to think about shoes; as something that won't sit in a landfill for an eternity."



### **Against the grain**

The BIO.D collection for men and women includes classic Simple sneakers in the D-Solve range for men and D-Kay range for women along with a flip flop collection for the warmer spring and summer months. The main aim of the range, as with all of the brand's ranges, is to move away from the "over-hyped, over-marketed, and over-teched" trainers that were the mainstay during the 1990s to produce comfortable and stylish shoes that are also sustainable. Its shoe collections use materials such as recycled car tires and recycled plastic soda bottles, materials that would otherwise sit in a landfill, as well as jute and other sustainable materials.

The D-Kay Leather for women features eco-certified leathers, suedes and certified organic cotton laces. It is designed with a classic quilted stitch-styling which, according to the company, gives it a "subtle and timeless" look. Joining the D-Kay in the autumn line is the Take On Ribbon, a low-profile sneaker with biodegradable insoles and ribbon laces in complementary colours. The Take On Ribbon is a partially recycled shoe with soles constructed from recycled car tires, foot inserts made from post-consumer recycled paper and recycled PET grosgrain ribbon laces. Another addition to the Take On collection is the Take On Leather, made using eco-certified leather.

Also included in the autumn Simple range for women is the Satire Flat Elastic, a vegan shoe made using jute, certified organic cotton and recycled PET elastic straps, so it is easier to put the shoes on and take them off. The Satire Flat Elastic is one of five vegan shoes in the Simple autumn line that are free of any animal products or by-products.

*The D-Solve for men features certified organic cotton, eco-certified suede and a biodegradable sole.*

### **Whatever the weather**

The men's collection also focuses heavily on environment. In the BIO.D range, the D-Bunk Mid is a mid-height, rustic style shoe. Its uppers are made from eco-certified, weatherproof leather and suede uppers, making it suitable for outdoor enthusiasts and casual wearers. It was specifically designed with the autumn season's unpredictable weather in mind. Also included in the BIO.D collection is the D-Solve Pro, a mid-height version of the D-Solve sneaker, which features a hook and loop closure system. Made with eco-certified suede and certified organic cotton, the D-Solve Pro features a biodegradable midsole and outsole.

Other new models in the men's autumn collection are the Carport Elastic, a slip-on sneaker made with recycled wool and eco-certified suede uppers. The recycled wool comes from second-hand wool jumpers recovered from charity shops. It is then rewoven into soft woven fabric instead, once again, of ending up at landfill sites. The black, grey or brown wool used in the Carport Elastic is said to offer the warmth and comfort benefits of a thick jumper. The Carport Elastic is considered a partially recycled shoe as it uses post-consumer recycled inserts, a biodegradable "pedbed" and a sole made from recycled car tires.

"The sneakers use jute and eco-certified microfibres," the company spokesperson says. "The laces and linings are made from certified organic cotton. They're put together using water-based cements and all of the shoe shapers and boxes are made from post-consumer recycled paper. Also, they're



lightweight." He adds: "On the flip flops we use our wavy egg crepe EVA top sole and, if you haven't already experienced this, let us tell you, you are missing out."

### **The next generation**

Not to leave out the younger generation, Simple also has a range of new eco-friendly shoes for children and toddlers, although there is no BIO.D range for children as yet. Its autumn range features new Weege booties made from wool and washable suede. The shoes feature fun appliques, including a submarine and octopus or a squirrel and acorn. Another new addition is the Woogee, a new toddler boot for boys and girls. It features washable eco-certified suede uppers and recycled nylon button closures to help parents with the difficult task of getting the shoes on and off.

"We are always tickled to see our shoes on little feet," says Ms Rios. "We build our shoes with the future in mind, so naturally, seeing the little people that will grow up to be in charge of the world wearing and loving Simple is inspiring, to say the least."

The new Sidecar shoe is a knit boot for girls aged between four and eight. It is designed to keep feet warm in cold conditions and is available in maroon, navy and black. The slouched knee-height boot has eco-certified suede uppers and certified cotton linings. The boy's Carport Elastic, a slip-on sneaker, comes in chocolate and black. Made

*The Flippee for women has recycled PET webbing straps and a biodegradable sole.*

with eco-certified suede and leather uppers, it also features recycled wool. Like the men's version, the shoe has post-consumer recycled inserts, a biodegradable pedbed and a sole made from recycled car tires.

According to the company spokesperson, wearing Simple sneakers and flip flops gives the sensation of walking on marshmallows. "The insoles of the sneakers are made from a polyurethane and recycled rubber mixture and, as if that wasn't enough icing on the cake, we added in a ridiculously squishy latex heel and arch pad to give an extra bump of comfort and support," he says. "And, in the grand scheme of things, the biodegrading process happens pretty quickly. It only takes 20 years for the microbes to turn our sneaker and sandal bottoms into dirt. That's less time than it takes for a baby born yesterday to reach the legal drinking age [in the US]."



*The Satire Flat Elastic for women is made from a jute and certified organic cotton blend with a biodegradable insole.*